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# **Teaching, not telling:**

## **Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> UK Information Literacy and Summon Day**

Manchester Metropolitan University, 25 July 2013

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# Introduction

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The 2013 'Information Literacy and Summon' event was the second of its kind. In July 2012 a group of information literacy practitioners met at Sheffield Hallam University to share their thoughts and practices around teaching academic information skills in the age of discovery systems. The key message, reiterated by speakers throughout the day, was that discovery services such as Summon have had a profound, even revolutionary, impact on how libraries present academic information resources to students. Speakers were finding that with a format-inclusive and intuitive interface, the need for complex 'show-and-tell' resource demonstrations was all but eliminated – along with the concomitant risks of student boredom, bewilderment and database overload. The clear and unanimous message was that 'Summon frees up time for information literacy' (<http://summonil2012.wordpress.com/>).

The 2013 conference, held at Manchester Metropolitan University on 25 July, picked up and extended these themes in a programme that combined the traditional conference presentation format with five-minute 'lightning talks' in which speakers modelled how they present Summon to students. This mix of formats yields both practical insights and teaching tips, and more reflective considerations of our role and impact as teaching librarians. The papers in this collection do not only explore technological developments: they consider too the institutional culture shifts demanded by the disruptive technology of discovery systems (Pattern); how our presentations can be made more relevant and engaging (Jenkins, Leonard); and how to align the way we present information systems with students' widely varying subject needs (Buchanan). They explore how to design activities that enable students to relate their prior experience to new knowledge (Edwards and Hill's two contributions); how to help build students' confidence and self-belief (Johnston and Walton); and how to interweave threshold concepts about academic practices into practical information skills support (Coonan).

This collection therefore offers a unique exploration of the impact of discovery systems on our identities as teaching librarians. If we are no longer forced by necessity to act as navigational intermediaries for clunky, unintuitive interfaces crammed with search jargon and overloaded with 'advanced' filtering features, we can redefine our expertise so that it is no longer perceived in terms of finding and navigating complex systems, and instead as helping our students understand how information is used, negotiated and valued within the academic community. We have the opportunity to shift our practice from *telling* to *teaching* – that is, from didactic instruction to providing authentic, meaningful and contextually appropriate opportunities for students to engage with academic information in ways that enable them to create *for themselves* an informed and reflective relationship with it.

The insights provided by this collection offer not only a snapshot of our changing practices in an era of unprecedented changes in academic information resources, but also a rich source of reflective stimulus and inspiration for all information and library staff engaged in facilitating learning. Enjoy!

# Riding the Gartner Hype Cycle

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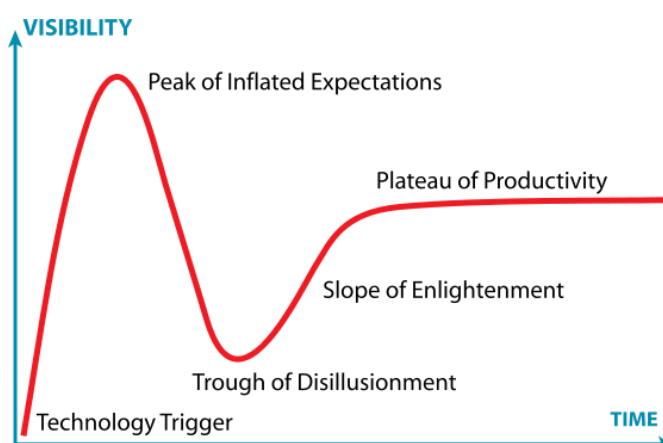
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## Introduction

My presentation at the second 'Summon and Information Literacy' event took a fairly light-hearted look at how Summon is often received at libraries, using the Gartner Hype Cycle. This graph is a nonscientific, slightly tongue-in-cheek way of showing the changing response to a new product or technology over time.



**Figure 1. The [Gartner Hype cycle](https://www.gartner.com/technology/research/methodologies/hype-cycle.jsp), artwork by Jeremy Kemp (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

See [www.gartner.com/technology/research/methodologies/hype-cycle.jsp](https://www.gartner.com/technology/research/methodologies/hype-cycle.jsp) for more on the original concept.

The process begins with the *Technology Trigger*, the point at which a gap in the market is perceived and a new product is developed. If early impressions are positive, this creates high expectations: however, these can go beyond what the software can actually deliver, thus causing the *Trough of Disillusionment*. Users might stay in the Trough of Disillusionment for a while, but as they become more familiar with the scope of the technology and what it can really do, rather than expectations based on hype, they start to make their way up the *Slope of Enlightenment* at a more realistic pace.

I'm going to apply this to our experiences of using Summon at Huddersfield and of other libraries that I've talked to about their Summon implementation. This is not to imply that Summon is an over-hyped product, but to suggest that our expectations of our shiny new toys are sometimes set a little too high - particularly in the case of a disruptive technology like Summon.

## Technology Trigger

Prior to Summon, the federated search product we had at Huddersfield was failing to meet the needs of our users and was widely disliked for being slow, clunky and unreliable. Increasingly we were seeing traffic to library e-resources being driven from Google Scholar and, anecdotally, students were telling us that their lecturers were advising them to use Google Scholar as the library services were too difficult to use. Although we could point to growing evidence that Scholar was an imperfect solution, having only partial or unknown coverage of resources, the reality was we simply couldn't compete on ease of use. We knew we'd have to make a radical change to improve the situation.

## Peak of Inflated Expectations

As we started to look around for ways of improving e-resource provision, we saw an early version of Summon during March/April 2009 and it convinced us that we could potentially deliver a Scholar-like experience for our users. After going out to tender, we selected Summon and began implementation during late 2009. We launched Summon as a beta service in January 2010 and ran it in parallel with our existing federated search product until July 2010.

At this point our expectations were extremely high. It looked as though Summon would index all kinds of content from a single search box, and that there would be no need to teach database interfaces any more at all. In addition it seemed as though the capacity of our MARC records would be fully exploited. However, it didn't all work out exactly as we thought ...

## Trough of Disillusionment

Paradoxically, one of the hardest issues around implementing Summon is the need to understand that it was designed from day one as a tool to support the information-seeking behaviours of students and researchers. To paraphrase a comment Matt Borg made at the 2012 Multimedia Information & Technology conference: the trouble with Summon is that students don't need to be taught how to use it, but librarians do.

This is not an easy pill to swallow, and I suspect it's one of the reasons why some libraries choose to implement alternative discovery service products that behave more like a traditional library database. The reality is that while any technology will change the way you work, Summon is a more disruptive technology than others and it forced our librarians to revise their expectations not just about Summon itself but also about our research services generally.

During the 'disillusionment' phase, it's common to become fixated on issues such as:

- title coverage of specific journal platforms and concerns over missing content
- a desire to apply familiar advanced searching techniques, as used with other databases, to Summon

- the realisation that students will still need to be taught how to use the native interfaces of certain subject-specific databases
- OpenURL is an imperfect linking solution, so article-level linking to a small number of journal platforms can be hit-and-miss
- if you haven't previously implemented a next generation OPAC, it's likely that errors in cataloguing will be exposed for the first time - we found that all of our music scores had been catalogued as audio CDs.

## Slope of Enlightenment

We struggled with these issues for a few months and during that time it was hard to see the wood for the trees - to some extent we became fixated on the bits that weren't working rather than seeing the potential. Then we started to get really good feedback and began to see that our students loved it. Many academics love it too, although not all of them are converts. In quantitative terms, most of our e-resources have seen dramatic increases in COUNTER full-text download.

We've tweaked how Summon works for us to make it a better experience for our users. At first we tried to put everything into it so that all our subscribed databases would be discoverable, but not all the interfaces were fully compatible and this meant that students struggled with some of them. Although we were keen to include Open Access content, we found some of the OA platforms deliver an extremely poor user experience, so those were removed. We've changed our approach and now don't include everything. We also make considerable use of the Summon API and have developed a lot of new services based on it.

## Plateau of Productivity

This leads us to the *Plateau of Productivity*, where rather than being disappointed by unrealistic expectations we can now recognise what the product can do and how to fine-tune it to meet our users' needs. At the same time we're seeing how using Summon has altered the approach to teaching. As many presenters at the 2012 and 2013 Summon and Information Literacy events have described, Summon frees up teaching time from database demonstration and allows us to concentrate on the delivery of information literacy.

Finally, we can share our experiences with other institutions who are implementing (or thinking about implementing) discovery systems. At Huddersfield we're old-timers: we've had Summon for over three years now. Other universities have started using it more recently or may be launching it for this academic year. We all have different experiences of the software, but we're all on the curve of the Gartner Hype Cycle at different points. Sharing our experiences and practices at events like this means that no matter where we are on that curve, we can all learn something.

# The platypus and the sausage: teaching Summon across diverse subjects at Sheffield Hallam University

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## Introduction

The first Information Literacy and Summon Day took place at Sheffield Hallam University in 2012. As Sheffield Hallam's subject librarian looking after Engineering and Mathematics I was asked at fairly short notice to talk about my faculty's use of Summon, largely because I was the only member of my team who happened to be free that day. However, despite its rather hasty preparation, my talk seemed to make enough of an impression for me to be asked to present an updated version the following year.

Although it would be nice to think that this was all down to my dynamic presentation and penetrating insights, I suspect that it is in fact because I am very lucky in working in a team that supports a faculty with a particularly eccentric portfolio of subjects. This has put me in an excellent position to see how Summon works within a wide variety of subject contexts. So, based on my own experiences and the kindly-recounted experiences of my colleagues, here are some of my thoughts on two academic years' worth of teaching information literacy using Summon to some very different sets of students.

## Summon at Sheffield Hallam University

We have had Summon at Sheffield Hallam University since the summer of 2011, and have just - in January 2014 - moved to Summon 2.0. Here, Summon goes under the name of Library Search - which is hopefully self-explanatory to students and staff - and has pride of place on the learning centres' webpages, known as the Library Gateway (<http://library.shu.ac.uk/>). It is set up as a single searchbox, with both the library catalogue and other collections, such as journals, covered in one search. One of the reasons we wanted to get a discovery tool was to make our journals holdings much more visible, and we didn't want to risk hiding them away again in a separate search box. Those searchers who do not want journals and the like can filter them out very quickly using the 'Refine Your Search' options.

Other resources, databases and search tools are collected together in a series of subject guides based on LibGuides software. There is also an A-Z list of resources by name, and a specialised guide for video, image and audio material.



## **ACES: the duck-billed platypus of faculties**

At Sheffield Hallam University each of the four faculties is supported by its own team of librarians. Three of the faculties consist of more-or-less logical groups of subjects, roughly equating to business, health, and humanities and social sciences. The faculty I support is composed of everything that is left over: much like the platypus, it is a beast apparently composed from off-cuts belonging to variety of wholly unrelated animals. The disparate elements that make up the faculty make it a very unlikely-looking creature indeed, although - also like the platypus - this odd assemblage does seem to function more or less successfully. It is therefore an excellent place to see the very different ways Summon is used by very different groups of students.

The faculty is known as ACES, which stands for Art, Computing, Engineering and Science. However, the range of subjects covered is even broader than that - but that wouldn't make such a nice acronym - and includes: engineering, electronics, IT, computer games, business computing, manufacturing and logistics, mathematics, fine art, design, graphic design, fashion, film-making and animation, journalism, public relations and media studies. Students can range from an 18 year-old studying jewellery-making to a mature, part-time railway engineer being supported through their course by their employer. These groups of students all have their own distinct requirements: while they all use Summon, they use it in very different ways.

So, grouping the subjects together in three clusters, here are some of the differences in Summon usage we have found between our subjects.

### **Engineering, IT and Mathematics**

These courses tend to be practical and applied, and so for the early parts of the course the students are not set many traditional academic essays; there is a body of knowledge and skills which needs to be built up before students can tackle the more advanced material. As a result, they do not do much academic research before their final-year projects. Because of this, as well as having an induction in their first year, undergraduate students will generally have a booster session in their final year to build up their search skills (postgraduate and doctoral students, who do far more academic research, receive much more training from the very beginning, including dedicated sessions on referencing and reading skills). However, the students' projects, reports and assignments before their final year might well require less typically academic but more specialised resources, such as standards, market research and company reports.

Of all the groups of students within the faculty, it is this one which has probably benefited most from Summon. These subjects have always been plentifully supplied with e-books and e-journals, which are well represented on Summon; in the last few months more technical online resources such as our BSI and ASTM standards collections have also become available to search on Summon. The nature of the subject material means that it also tends to come in short chapters and chunks, making it a lot easier to read online than more extended humanities and social sciences writing, and therefore a better match with an electronically-focused platform like Summon. So while by no means all our relevant holdings can be found through Summon, a very significant portion can be; and because students are not required to do that much complicated or in-depth academic searching for their first couple of years, Summon can easily accommodate the bulk of their search requirements.

However, although all of this has many benefits, I am finding that it is bringing up some quite major issues for teaching searching and information literacy, as I will explain later in the article.

## Art and Design

Much like the Engineering, Computing and Mathematics students, the Art and Design students do not tend to do much traditional in-depth academic research before their final year, instead spending the previous years in more practical work, and not always seeing the point of more theoretical tasks. But also in a similar way, they will require non-academic business material, particularly market research, before their final year. However, there is a much bigger focus on inspiration and creativity: one upshot of this is that when students have library inductions they are not given set exercises, but given the chance to try their own searches.

One major obstacle in using Summon in Art and Design is that Summon is primarily intended to find and retrieve electronic journals, whereas a large proportion of periodicals in this subject are still printed on paper. This means that Summon can pass over a sizeable chunk of the library holdings, making it appear that far fewer articles are available than is in fact the case. To help remedy the situation our systems team has added the records for several key print journals into Summon, but this is not an ideal solution, as some material will still be missed in a search. As a result, the Art and Design students receive more instruction in using the native interfaces of subject-specific databases. Postgraduates are taught to look for whole journals as well as individual journal articles, to be better aware of the library's actual holdings, something which Computing and Engineering students haven't needed to do.

The way that Art and Design students search also has a negative impact on their use of Summon. Unlike the Engineering and Computing students, who tend to have very precise, focused search objectives - which favour electronic search methods - the Art and Design students make much more use of browsing, serendipity and association. Library tours feature much more commonly in their inductions, since knowing where to find the books on the shelves for browsing can play as important a role as electronic searching. After all, for these students the illustrations and images in the books are at least as useful as the text, if not more so - and Summon is still primarily a text-based tool.

Another issue that troubles Art and Design is that their search terms tend to be quite loose and broad-ranging - such as 'spirituality' or 'post-colonialism', for instance - and a multidisciplinary search tool such as Summon simply brings back too much irrelevant material. Using a subject-specific Art and Design database instead helps filter down such searches to find more suitable results, although it may be that the greater use of Disciplines in Summon 2.0 could fulfil a similar role. Because their searches are loosely-defined and individualised in this way, the support for students doing final-year projects often takes the form of one-to-ones rather than bigger classes.

One area in which the Art and Design students are very well served by Summon, and probably far better than any other subject in the faculty, is online reference. Appropriate reference works such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or the *Grove Dictionary of Art* work very effectively with Summon, and so Summon can be presented to students as a simple and credible alternative to Wikipedia. Conversely, some of the specialised engineering reference books have interfaced very poorly with Summon, and so they are not promoted much with those courses.

## Journalism, PR and Media studies

The Journalism, Public Relations and Media Studies students are very much the odd ones out within the faculty as their courses tend to follow a more conventional social sciences structure, meaning that they start to research and write academic essays much earlier in their course. And while there are some core resources, the nature of the subjects might require students to research more or less anything, so they will have to be familiar with a very wide selection of materials and search tools indeed. Since journalists have to be familiar with a wide selection of information sources as part of their job, this goes beyond normal academic materials to include sources of governmental, business and legal information. As a result, after the first-year induction, these students receive a further four extra-long information literacy sessions in their second year.

The Journalism, PR and Media Studies students do make considerable use of Summon: however, the sheer breadth of materials they need to use means that many important resources fall outside its scope. Of the four classes they receive in the second year only one is on Summon, compared to two on using other resources and one on referencing software. Unfortunately, some key academic resources do not work well with Summon, which means that students have to go to the native interface for the best results. For instance, we use Nexis as our primary newspapers database but have had such poor experiences linking out to articles that we eventually set Summon's default search to exclude newspapers. The huge variety of resources these students may require is a problem outside of Summon, of course: we are still trying to create a subject guide that adequately covers a good proportion of likely resources while not growing too large and unwieldy to be useful.

## Teaching with Summon

One of the great benefits of Summon is that it is sufficiently intuitive for students to understand and use with little or no instruction. Whilst aptitude and engagement obviously varies between individuals and groups, almost all students get the gist of how it works almost at once. They may need help to carry out specific tasks, but they understand the basic principles. Even supposedly non-technical students, such as Art and Design, take to it very quickly. This means that students can spend more time practicing and experimenting with library systems, rather than just hearing about them. And because less time has to be spent on explanations and demonstrations, more time can also be spent on other topics, such as wider information literacy; or, if you have one of those minor crises that occasionally occur in a class (the students don't have usernames and passwords, or they all get lost on the way to the library) the lesson is still salvageable, even should resolving the problem take a significant time.

Aside from freeing up more time, there are other benefits in students being able to search Summon with little instruction, particularly if you have many classes to teach. If you have to teach what essentially is the same lesson to class after class, it is easy to lose enthusiasm or get stuck in a rut: if the students are asking new questions or encountering novel issues as part of their own searches, it breaks up the routine and keeps up your interest. Talking to students individually as they search is also a lot easier on the throat than lecturing from the front of the class, and so you stand far less risk of losing your voice at the end of a long day's teaching.

Summon can also be helpful when sharing teaching with colleagues, particularly in a faculty such as ACES when each member of a team might rely on very different resources to support their subjects. Having one central, multi-purpose resource in Summon reduces the number of unfamiliar and arcane databases you have to deal with when teaching someone else's subject group, and so reduces the stress for the stand-in (everyone has at least one weird and incomprehensible database of which they are terrified). And if they know that their stand-in is going to be familiar with most of the content, it makes a lot easier for the original subject librarian to create a lesson plan. There is a limit to how far this can be taken, of course: unlike some of the other faculty teams, who have more homogenous groups of students to cater for, we've not been able to create universal inductions and classes to run across all our faculty. Our students don't just use different resources: they often think differently.

Journal articles often dominate search results in Summon, which gives the teacher an ideal chance to introduce what is often an entirely new type of material to students. In the bad old days, students had to actively search out journals across a range of specialist databases: if they did not know about journals as a format, they would never know to look for them. Like most academic libraries, we probably spend more on journals than any other resource type. All that money is now repaid by journals now being far more prominent and accessible through a single, familiar interface, rather than a variety of individual databases. Summon can be set up as a friendly sand-pit where students only find easily-accessible e-journals from within our holdings, thus avoiding those bad experiences on other databases when every single result seems to be unavailable. The 'Refine Your Search' options even provide an opportunity to bring up peer review during classes.

Nevertheless, there are some issues within our faculty about journals on Summon: we've already mentioned that print-heavy subjects like Art and Design can suffer under Summon's online focus. As I've also said, the bulk of the students within our faculty won't make much use of journals until the final year of their course, and anything you say in the first-year induction will mostly likely soon be forgotten if they don't have cause to use it. Indeed, a high-level journal article can be utterly baffling or even terrifying to a newbie Engineering student, and might put them off using them when it counts. While I have always mentioned journals in inductions so far, I am aware that they do need to be presented in just the right way for students to get the most out of them, and that time spent explaining journals is time that could be spent on other resources which they are probably much more likely to use in the short term. However, even if students may not require the journals for a considerable time, when they do need them they can look for them on the same old search platform they've been using to find their textbooks for the last couple of years. If students have to learn to deal with a new material type late in their course, at least they learn about it in a familiar and trusted setting.

This leads onto the fact that Summon is an ideal launch-pad for introducing students to other search tools. Summon's layout, with the results in a column down the middle, refinement options off to one side, and a search box at the top, is common to most databases and search engines these days. If a student knows their way around Summon, then they can find most of the main features in other search tools: they can be reassured that novel resources 'work just like Summon'. If students can see that the techniques they have learned on Summon are applicable elsewhere, it may go some way to convincing them that they are transferable skills. Summon can also be used as a familiar environment to present new search techniques and concepts such as Boolean, facets, sorting, creating lists, advanced searches and catalogue/database records. True, there are some search features which Summon doesn't yet possess or do particularly well, such as citation searching,

subject headings or complex search syntax. On the plus side, however, this can be turned around as a reason for using more specialist databases over Summon for more in-depth work.

One feature we haven't promoted very heavily is the ability to produce references and citations from saved items. This may seem a little odd, as it is quick and easy to use, and the students always perk up when they hear about any sort of help with referencing. True, the Harvard format Summon uses is slightly different to the Sheffield Hallam house style; but most tutors in the faculty are quite forgiving when it comes to small deviations in referencing (this is not always true elsewhere in the university). However, we usually focus on the referencing tools built into Word instead: it handles citations as well as bibliographies, and is capable of working with sources outside of Summon, which is crucial for many subject areas, as we have seen. There is also a time consideration: we only have so much time to cover referencing, and unfortunately something has to give - and the Summon feature is the least flexible. We offer some classes devoted to referencing, but these will usually be on using dedicated reference management software, and in those circumstances it makes sense to look at exporting citations from Summon into the reference management software, rather than Summon's own features.

## Swine into sausages: beyond Summon

One potential benefit of Summon – at least in theory - is that it could provide a one-stop shop so that students only need to learn the one search tool. For some subjects, as I've discussed, this isn't possible: either key resources are incompatible, or students' methods and styles of searching don't fit with the way Summon works. However, for other subjects such as Engineering there are not only plenty of resources available through Summon, but also for their first few years the students don't usually carry out the very complex searches which might require other search tools. There is a very real decision to be made about whether to bother teaching such students about other databases - at least initially - when they can get what they want through Summon. I have been mulling this over for some time, although to date, while classes have indeed focused chiefly on Summon, I have always at least mentioned the other sources and tools available on the subject guides.

The analogy that has struck me is with sausages, a neatly-packaged and much-beloved foodstuff. However, sausages are a highly-processed food which conceal their origins: they first enter the world as pigs, and there is a whole messy business of animal husbandry, butchery, meat-grinders and breadcrumbs to get through before a hefty, hairy, grunting quadruped can be converted into something you can serve up in a long bun with mustard. What Summon normally does is serve up students with a diet of delicious information hotdogs. But if things go wrong during the preparation, there is every chance that students can be left with the information equivalent of a heap of unappetising raw offal or an enraged and indignant porker, because they have been shielded from where their food actually comes from and how it is prepared and cooked.

Summon has to work with lots of material formats from a huge number of sources, all of which are in flux, and inevitably a few things will go wrong. We now have working access to our two major standards collections, but there were several months of major problems and minor quirks to get through before we arrived at that point. Likewise, we are currently discussing how many of the free open access journals to include, since linking to the articles in them can often be erratic or confusing because of their variability and idiosyncrasies. However hard we try, it is unlikely that we can ever make Summon a seamless and homogenous experience, or prevent the occasional

resource behaving oddly: Summon can remove the majority of obstacles, but not all of them. So in devising exercises for students, I personally try to set a few with potentially unusual or awkward results, just so that students have some experience of dealing with those issues in a classroom setting before having to face them in the wild. It is tempting to present students with a series of perfect examples to show them all the advantages of a discovery tool: but if the students learn how relatively easy it is to deal with some of the more problematic resources, they are less likely to be put off when they encounter them for themselves.

A related matter is that Summon tends to change quickly and regularly. In many ways this is a good thing, as problems can often be fixed in a very timely way. However, this also means that Summon can suddenly change behaviour in quite dramatic ways: the Summon you show to a class today will not be the same Summon you were demonstrating the previous day. This has an impact on your teaching, of course, as you learn to expect the unexpected (the students are usually fairly patient as you flail around in panic, trying to find another example that does what you want it to). But it also affects what the students need to learn, as they need to be able to figure out what to do if a given resource starts behaving differently. Once again, it does pay to make sure the students know how to deal with some more tricky results while they are still in the classroom.

Finally there is an issue in the way that Summon lumps together a whole raft of different types of material, potentially blurring crucial differences between them in the eyes of the students. This is particularly important when it comes to the more esoteric material such as standards or market research, which don't normally appear in the typical scheme of material types in information literacy teaching. However, this is an issue that applies to a large number of other search tools, and filtering out different content types is very straightforward in Summon - and, in fairness, students didn't always differentiate between material types even when we were training them to use individual databases.

## Conclusions

By and large, getting Summon seems to have been a positive force at Sheffield Hallam University: but then, as an engineer, I would say that, wouldn't I? Looking back at what I've written, I think there are two main points with which I'd like to conclude.

Firstly, if other institutions are anything like Sheffield Hallam, there will be a broad range of initial feelings when you first get the service. If you are in this situation, please bear in mind that different subjects will be served in very different ways by Summon. If one of your colleagues has a radically different response to Summon than you, then - although personal opinions may still be involved - it could be down to how their subject fares under a discovery service. A one-size-fits-all approach will probably not work.

Secondly, Summon will have a bigger impact on teaching and learning than simply freeing up more time. In the bad old days, the structure and content of your teaching was pretty much dictated by the need to cover all the various potential resources and the different ways they worked. As it becomes more straightforward to search, you may need to start making decisions about what students are searching for in the first place, and just how you present the process to them.



# What's the name of the game?

## How Summon saves time for fun games

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## **Introduction**

Over the past two years the Liaison Librarian team supporting Computing and Design Engineering at Middlesex University have been changing their pedagogical practice to base their teaching on games and activities rather than 'follow me' demonstrations. This paper discusses the broader issues that prompted these changes to our information literacy training, the ideas and inspiration that underpin our new approach, the games and activities we have developed, the role of Summon as enabling technology, and the results of a survey undertaken to measure the impact of our teaching. It concludes with a brief look at future developments.

## **Problems with previous practice**

When these developments first began, the then Middlesex University School of Engineering and Information Sciences had no central coordination for skills provision. As a result much of our teaching was delivered as an *ad hoc* add-on to the curriculum, as and when we could persuade academic staff to allow us to see their students. This resulted in inconsistent provision, often delivered at a time not relevant to the programme, with insufficient time to deliver enough content and inappropriate rooms.

This was not helped by a complex module and pathway structure across the Computing undergraduate programmes which made it very difficult to see students without duplication for some in the class. A low point one year saw some students turn up for a third repeat library session because we had been invited to teach in three of their four first-year modules! Yet we had only seen a small percentage of the first years.

As we could not guarantee to see all first years, second- and third-year teaching was a problem as some students would attend expecting to build on the previous year's curriculum, whereas others were asking for more basic tuition.

It is clear from what we see of the students that whilst many are techno-savvy, i.e. they know how to push buttons and play games, the Computing students are no different from others in having very poor information literacy skills. They lack the skills and knowledge to find appropriate information, to evaluate it and to then use it effectively in their written work.

Finally, teaching sessions often consisted of monotonous demonstrations of different resources with overuse of text-heavy PowerPoint slides. This is often due to librarians lacking teaching expertise and fearing radical changes to traditional teaching methods. Common errors that can result are:

- **Generic teaching and death by PowerPoint:** The same wordy slides with the same basic examples being used for all students irrespective of the actual project work they might be doing, so students do not see the information skills training as relevant (Diekema et al. 2011)
- **Tools-based didactic teaching:** Teaching students to follow a defined path to search multiple different systems and databases, which is very confusing and hard to understand, rather than a constructivist approach where students make their own meaning by trying things out. Emphasis is placed on searching correctly, rather than on content to be found. Students switch off and continue to use Google as a simple, single place to search (Wang 2007)
- **Too much in too little time:** With only a limited session, perhaps only one hour grudgingly given to the library, the temptation is to cram in lots of detail, which no student could possibly remember, rather than teaching a few key topics well. This is an occasion when quality must be more important than quantity, as noted by Chen and Lin (2011).

In addition, many librarians, supporting subject areas about which they know very little, may overcomplicate information searching to demonstrate their own expertise. Librarians need to remember to teach to the level needed by the student. At first-year undergraduate level this is quite basic, despite what some academic staff may think the students need to know.

## Inspiration for change

In 2010 Vanessa Hill, the Computing Liaison Librarian, attended a CILIP workshop on 'Teaching information literacy in HE' led by Sharon Markless. She was inspired by a number of the key principles outlined as fundamental to effective information literacy teaching (Markless 2010). These were:

- **We teach three to five times too much material in our sessions:** We should reflect on what will make the biggest difference to the students in the time we have and refer them to online guides for wider or less essential topics.
- **We try to clone our expertise as librarians:** This is of course impossible in a one-hour training session. In particular, we do not need to teach students how to search databases, as we shall see now that we have discovery tools like Summon. Instead we should focus on the value of different resources for academic research, effective searching techniques, evaluation of information and ethical use.



- **Discussion is powerful:** Ask the students how they find information, find out what they already know and find out what they want. Get the students to learn and discover together by trying out searches they think of for themselves. Do not use pre-planned searches or demonstrations as you do not need to. We learn much about students' understanding from the questions the students ask.
- **Learning by doing is empowering:** In sessions we should encourage active participation through a variety of activities such as trying things out, feeding back, solving problems, peer discussion and reflection on mistakes. As we shall see, in our training, students use Summon to try things out for themselves. If students are not involved actively, their learning will be shallow, for example if they are watching a demonstration of how to use Summon. Interaction and exploration promote engagement and deeper learning.
- **Students should be learners, not the taught:** Our role is to support and facilitate this learning. Disciplinary context matters to enable this, so the activities designed for different subjects may need to be different.

A year later Adam Edwards attended a workshop at LILAC 2011 led by Susan Boyle on the use of games in teaching (Boyle 2011). This was a 'light bulb' moment for him, being inspired to develop games as a means to learn by doing. Boyle's principles for games are that they should be:

- Fun to do, as all games should be
- Quick, lasting no more than ten minutes: if you cannot make the point you need in this amount of time the game is probably not effective
- Simple to prepare, as none of us has the time to do anything too sophisticated
- Easy to grasp and play, with no complex rules to learn. This ensures the game is about exploring and discovering the issues, not the game itself
- Designed to meet a specific learning need or objective, to ensure the focus of the game is clear.

By combining Markless and Boyle's ideas we aimed to change our teaching from that which encourages "... lifting and transporting textual substance from one location, the library, to another, their teacher's briefcases ..." to "searching, analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, selecting, rejecting ..." (Kleine 1987).

## The institutional context

At the same time as we were reflecting on our practice, the School of Engineering and Information Science was looking at how it could embed employability skills in to the curriculum in a more effective way, given widespread concern in higher education that these skills are lacking (King 2002). Meanwhile, the Library had purchased Summon as its resource discovery tool. Both these developments were key enablers in pushing forward our changed teaching methods.

**Employability skills** were addressed through a small working group consisting of Adam Edwards, Vanessa Hill, our colleague Paula Bernaschina from the Learner Development Unit (LDU) Academic Writing team, and the School Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader, Serengul Smith. We mapped our library and academic skills teaching on to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) employability framework adopted by Middlesex University. In parallel, Serengul was looking at how these skills were being addressed within modules in the current programmes and looking ahead to the incorporation of amended learning outcomes in the new and revised programmes being developed. For example, finding and evaluating information sources maps to the CBI framework under problem-solving skills; awareness of plagiarism is part of communications and literacy; and finding information for individual projects is part of self-management. A more detailed description of the work we did and a detailed description of the mapping can be found in 'Embedding information skills as employability attributes' (Smith and Edwards 2012). This work had a number of benefits for the Library and LDU staff:

- Being part of a coordinated plan made it is easier to approach academic staff and persuade them to give up class time for Library and other skills training
- Better planning avoided module overlap and duplication of sessions noted above
- Better coordination with academic writing avoided duplication of content. For example, the librarians ceased to teach avoiding plagiarism and have handed this over to Academic Writing sessions to ensure the topic was covered in sufficient depth.

An outline of a typical Library training session is discussed later.

**Summon** was purchased by Middlesex in 2009 and introduced in 2010. For Computing courses Summon has major benefits as it enables the searching of three key resources at once: ACM Digital Library, IEEE Xplore and EBSCO Computer Source. Thus we could replace teaching these three very different-looking systems with a single simple search. Using Summon means students will also find material relevant to their needs in other subject databases, for example on the psychology of human-computer interaction or the educational use of computers. It also means students are much more aware of our electronic resources. Finally, they are also very impressed with the reference generator, a memorable in-class student comment, in typical north London vernacular, being "Dat is well sick man!" High praise indeed!

We use Summon as follows:

- As the main searching system for first years: We introduce searching specific databases in the third year and above, but do cover them briefly if the students ask us when they explore the Summon results and discover the underlying databases.
- As a hands-on Google style exploration tool: Students choose their own searches following practice thinking about keywords and we leave them to see what they can find. If mistakes are made then lessons are learned. Famously a group of students searching for Oyster - as in the London Transport e-ticket system - only searched for 'oyster' not 'Oyster card' and found oyster-flavoured ice cream. The 'yuk' factor made that memorable feedback when we

asked them to describe this to the full class. This is a classic example of how learning by discovery creates powerful and memorable learning moments which you simply do not get from 'follow me' demonstrations.

- As a confidence builder: One place to search delivers rapid results and, really crucially, Harvard references. This demonstrates to the students that the library does provide readily accessible quality information easily and simply, so is indeed 'better than Google'.
- To free time spent looking at different databases for discussion of
  - The benefits of the different resources we have
  - Effective keyword searching
  - Summon versus Google
  - Evaluation of the resources discovered.

We do not say "You must use Summon"; rather we discuss how Summon compares to Google and the quality of the results. In the same way we do not say "Do not use Wikipedia"; we say "Use with care and be aware of the reasons why". This is important in scaffolding onto students' current knowledge and experiences, rather than appearing to dictate what they should do.

## A typical training session

Within the library a small group of us met to discuss our teaching during the summer term of 2011. We identified the key elements we needed to cover and created a game or activity for each element. These elements can be mixed and matched as needed and we planned them as half-hour segments.

As noted before, coordination with Academic Writing was key to ensure we only taught what we needed to teach with no overlaps. The games and activities described below can be downloaded and reused under Creative Commons licence from [Jorum](#) (Edwards and Hill 2012). A typical first-year session might look like this:

- **Thinking about resources:** Using the lessons learned from the LILAC workshop (Boyle 2011) we developed a simple card-sorting game to promote peer learning, activation of prior knowledge and discussion. This introduces the basic quality information resources they will find in the library and also covers issues around websites and popular (trade) journals.
- **Keywords:** Using an image of a market stall, deliberately chosen to be outside their normal subject area, we ask the students to analyse the image for specific and alternative keywords and related topics. We then reinforce the learning by applying the analysis to their actual project. (See the lightning talk by the same authors in this volume for details of this game.)
- **Searching using Summon:** The students then try out the keywords using Summon. We assist the students' exploration of Summon by offering advice when they get stuck, but they take the lead on what they are searching for and how.

- **Evaluation:** We use example search results, typically printouts of a website like Wikipedia, a newspaper article from *The Sun* (printed full text from Proquest Newsstand so this does not look like an actual newspaper article), a trade journal with links to a shop, and an academic journal chosen to be deliberately out of date. The students complete a tick-sheet to evaluate the items against the classic criteria of relevance, currency, quality and intent, and then we take feedback. We make the point that none of the items is actually good enough to be used as sources for the topic in question, and if they found these results when doing their own searches they need to search again.

Several variations on the card game have been produced for second- and third-year students and the evaluation exercise varies to ensure the items being evaluated are relevant to the subject of study. We find this basic formula works well at postgraduate level too. The discussions are of a different nature and the feedback more detailed, but the learning is just as effective.

Having piloted a number of sessions at all levels in the autumn of 2011, including second years, we ran a SurveyMonkey survey of the second-year Computing students to find out if our training was making any difference. The survey was run two months after the training sessions and after the coursework we had been supporting had been marked, to enable us to see what, if any, impact our training had on their grades. The results showed that those who attended our training

- obtained better marks overall (+15% on average) and for the bibliography (+20%)
- were aware that Summon was the best place to search for information for the project (which required them to find up-to-date non-book sources)
- understood that academic authority, currency and relevance were important when choosing things to read.

Conversely, those not attending

- received lower marks
- placed an over-reliance on the library catalogue for information (and therefore would not find the most current sources)
- believed 'easy to read' to be more important than academic authority.

Of course we have to be careful not to read too much into this. The good marks could simply be down to the students attending being those who are keener to learn and who generally work harder. However, as this correlates with the much larger study at Huddersfield (Stone et al. 2012), we think the results have value and we use the message "Library training gets you better marks" to stress to students the value of our training sessions.

A fuller account of the survey and the detailed results can be found in our article 'Does it really improve their marks?: A brief foray into measuring the impact of information literacy training at Middlesex University' (Edwards and Hill, 2012).

## Future plans

This framework for training has been used with first and second years and will now roll out to the third years. We have developed our games and activities to ensure progression from year to year without repetition.

However, we are well aware that attendance at sessions is an issue, with 25% absence common despite our session being embedded into the normal timetable in the normal teaching spaces. This not only makes it harder for us to ensure progression but also is a serious academic issue. Studies such as that by Crede, Roch and Kieszczynska (2011) show that there is a direct correlation between final grades and attendance.

At the time of the presentation at Information Literacy and Summon 2013, a number of programmes were being revalidated and we intend to use this opportunity to push for further embedding of our training by suggesting learning outcomes which can be incorporated into module documents.

## Conclusions

The changes we have made to our pedagogy have worked. Successful collaboration and team teaching have improved the quality of our work and made it more rewarding. The games and activities have been adapted and used by colleagues at Middlesex and elsewhere. The survey results suggest this has made an impact on our students' work and we use this as a key message to students: *Library training gets you better marks.*

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# Summon, information literacy and 'Step Up To HE'

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## Introduction

This paper, originally presented by Eleanor Johnston as a Prezi, outlines how Staffordshire University's 'Step Up To HE' programme encourages students to become more effective critical thinkers in their studies.

## Introducing 'Step Up To HE'

'Step Up To HE' is a free, five-week programme that provides a 'taste' of university and is designed specifically to enable potential students to move towards their goals. It gives them the opportunity to see what it is like to study at university, particularly if they are concerned that they may not have the right qualifications or skills to study in higher education. There are many potential students who want to obtain a degree but are unsure what direction to take or what subject area is best for them.

'Step Up To HE' is aimed at anyone over 18 years old who is thinking about further study and may be unsure of where to start or what is involved. As attendance on the course is for two days a week (times 10.00am-2.30pm) this course is particularly useful for individuals who may have been out of education for some time, are currently working and/or have a range of commitments. Step Up is a good fit for an institution like Staffordshire University (a recruiting University) and an area like Stoke-on-Trent, as it provides non-traditional students with learning opportunities. In its current approach the programme has been running for five years; before that it formed part of a larger project called 'HE Full Circle'. (For a fuller account of the 'Step Up To HE' course see Taylor, 2012.)

The programme is designed to build individuals' confidence and develop existing skills. Many learners who complete the course progress onto a wide range of programmes at foundation or

degree level. The focus of this provision, through the development of a range of academic study skills and experiences, is to build learners' belief in their own potential for undergraduate study. This is not to solely increase their information capabilities for HE but also to provide them with information practices which reach far beyond HE to enable them to become engaged citizens.

Therefore, it is essential that the sessions delivered on Step Up are accessible, interesting, informative and enjoyable. One participant reported that 'Step Up To HE' had been effective preparation as it enabled "learning without being judged" (Taylor, 2012, p2).

## **The Library and 'Step Up'**

There has been an information literacy presence on the course for over four years. In the first three weeks of the course the library has three one-hour timetabled sessions with the Step Up students. Students are met on day 1 or day 2 of the course, then seen on two further occasions. This allows the library staff to develop a rapport with students, to act on feedback from previous weeks and to add additional information onto the VLE – for example, answering any particularly tricky questions received in session one. The three hours also mean that there is the time to listen to students, as opposed to simply rushing through what the library staff think students 'need' to learn. This enables the sessions to be student-centred and creates a sense of ownership for learners.

The three sessions follow the Walton & Cleland (2013) empirical model of information literacy and are structured as follows:

Week 1: Finding information

Week 2: Evaluating information

Week 3: Using information

### **Teaching methods**

These sessions have been team-taught from the outset, with Student Ambassadors and course leaders present as well as library staff. Currently, Eleanor Johnston delivers these sessions on behalf of Information Services with a 'tag team' partner - someone else from the service who has expertise and knowledge. Geoff Walton was the lead for the library sessions previously.

The sessions are as hands-on as possible. There is very little standing at the front talking; instead the emphasis is on interaction, collaboration and peer-to-peer learning. In essence, this is a constructivist approach where meaning is created and negotiated student-to-student and between students and tutors.

The technological aspects of Summon are not covered in the sessions. Rather, it is used to make access to academic resources as simple as possible.



## **Session 1: Finding Information**

Session 1 starts with a Q & A – ‘Ten things you want to know about the library, but were too afraid to ask’. It’s a nice ice-breaker: it creates a sense of ownership, gets the participants talking and gets a few unanswerable questions! Many of these questions are procedural, concerning how many? where are? who is? etc. This then leads on to ‘how to’ enquiries and the focus goes onto finding resources. In the first couple of years of Step Up, the source for finding resources in this session was always the library catalogue.

It is important to remember that this is a one-hour session covering a lot of practical information, and it has always been felt that the introduction of any of the subject-specific databases, showing their differing interfaces, search pages, results pages and displays, would be confusing for students and potentially lead to information overload. Yet it was an area for development, as no e-resources were covered in the early days in session one. With the University’s acquisition of Summon, it was finally possible to build in a demonstration and exercise for students to find e-resources.

Therefore, Summon was added to the Step Up programme in this ‘finding information’ session. It is used to demonstrate how easy it is to find material – whether these resources are books, ebooks, journals, databases or articles, in one search.

In the session, there is a brief explanation of the difference between the most popular search engine that Step Up students use (the same one as everyone else!) and Summon, for which the session tag line is ‘the academic Google’ - something that is expanded upon in the next session.

We show that Summon allows free access to resources that are either not available or charged for using other search engines, and introduce academic language such as ‘peer review’, ‘academic journals’ and ‘abstracts’ via a discussion forum and peer-to-peer conversations.

## **Session 2: Evaluating Information**

This is a very interactive and interesting session, in which students are asked to critically analyse a website using the pedagogical approach devised by Anthony Beal ([@redsontour](#)) from JISC. They are then offered alternative ways to find reliable sources - principally Summon.

Using the principles set out in week one, reiterating concepts such as peer review, and introducing new ideas such as analysing domains, this session really explores themes that are vital to a student in gaining a real understanding of the academic expectations at University. The example webpage critically evaluated is [www.martinlutherking.org](http://www.martinlutherking.org) – although the term ‘critical evaluation’ is not used until the exercise is completed.

There are three parts to the website evaluation exercise. Firstly, students look at just the name of the site, then read the Google description (“The truth about Martin Luther King: Includes historical trivia, articles and pictures. A valuable resource for teachers and students alike”), then finally go to view the webpage.

In classes, students realised that what they were expecting and what appeared were radically different. This was based on their misconceptions about the .org domain name and the accuracy of the Google description (who wrote this?). In fact, many students commented after exercise two that the Google description indicated the source would be useful for students. Instead of trying to run

through models such as The SCONUL Seven Pillars, or use terms such as critical evaluation, credibility, sources etc., students were themselves able to find out that using Google for academic research was time-consuming, unreliable and misleading. Indeed, some students were shocked by the content and intent of the website, and there were real 'light bulb moments' around comprehending the actual message of the site and the knowledge that the webpage was available, high in the Google rankings and not censored. Through this scaffolded approach (following Bordinaro & Richardson, 2004) students began to construct their own meaning regarding the evaluation of sources.

It is through this student-based group work and peer discovery that Summon is reintroduced from the previous week and additional features of the service are covered, such as using search limiters (for full text, peer review, by date etc.), finding keywords and subjects areas. When students run the same Martin Luther King search on Summon ('the academic Google'), their results are from academic publications, for example *History Today*, which is available in full text via a Summon search.

This session has been tracked for feedback, impact and results since February 2012 (there have been seven cohorts since then) and the feedback is immediate and shows impact: a typical student feedback statement was "Use Summon for researching – NOT Google".

### **Session 3: Using information**

Once students have located information (online and on the shelves), evaluated it and are ready to complete their assignments, they will be expected to reference their work.

The principles of referencing are introduced, again using group conversation, interaction and discussion. There is also a segment on plagiarism, as students are often confused on this issue. Indeed, some students will not use quotes or acknowledge their sources as they are unaware that correct acknowledgement is the difference between plagiarism and referencing.

Again, there is little in the way of talk from the librarians, as an 'in at the deep end' exercise gives an opportunity for groups to start thinking about what information is required in a reference and how to extract that information from a book, journal or online resource. This is very much an experiential approach (Kolb et al., 1991) where students complete a task for themselves with guidance from the teaching team.

The important aspect of this session is to create a very clear understanding in the students' minds about what information is required and, more importantly, why. Students work in groups, analysing a range of resources to reference them in the Harvard format. The library has a service called Refzone ([www.staffs.ac.uk/refzone](http://www.staffs.ac.uk/refzone)) with examples of a wide range of resources and details of how to reference them.

Some students found the mechanics of where to place punctuation and italics quite frustrating, as well as experiencing difficulties locating the essential information required for a reference, but all were able to explain why it was needed. All students use Refzone in the session and it is the librarians' roles as 'facilitators' to run visual and verbal checks that groups are comprehending and absorbing the information available.

It is indeed a relief then as part two of the session introduces referencing software and services to utilise in order to make this referencing job a little easier. There is no recommendation of a particular system to use, but the advice and golden rules are to save details of sources as students do their assignments and research.

A search is performed in Summon for *Psychology* by Gross – the ‘in at the deep end’ book that students were requested to reference at the start of the session. Recommended searches appear as the students start to type, and the ‘Save to Folder’ option is introduced. A selection of articles and sources from the results page are saved and the folder is opened to display the saved results. It is explained that this is a temporary folder that disappears when the session is closed, so the ‘Email Results’ function is explained. It is then that the search results format is changed to ‘Harvard’ and the reference list appears. There is usually a bit of a ‘wow’ factor when this is revealed, as the rest of the session was taken up with unravelling the minutiae of the parts of a reference, and then these pieces are put together by Summon. The caveat to check these (it is on the Summon page to ‘always check your references for accuracy’) is reinforced when the students themselves are asked to point out any amendments that are required. Summon 2.0 should allow for these folders and results to be saved and personalised, although Staffordshire University has not moved to this yet.

One response in class to the ‘reference reveal’ was that the work previously had been a waste of time, but other students in the session countered that without this explanation and practice use of Refzone, references would not be accurate and correct, leading to a loss of marks. This appreciation of the value of the session was immensely rewarding and vindicated the efforts of all on Step Up.

## **Reflecting on discovery, learning, and our relationships with students**

The Step Up students should not be scared out of academia by a relentless ‘push’ of information to them. Referencing or critical evaluation can be complicated and could be seen as something they ‘just don’t get and never will’. The principles of group work and peer assistance are used to counteract this. Group work is our preferred teaching method because the teaching and learning literature is full of the benefits of conversation in learning (e.g. Laurillard, 2002 and Osborne, 2010), plus our own long experience of the successful use of group work and peer-to-peer learning (e.g. Hepworth & Walton, 2009; Walton & Cleland, 2013). These techniques work because they foster active, experiential learning which in turn promotes reflection-in-action, where the learner adjusts behaviour as an action unfolds and is “smoothly embedded in to performance” (Moon, 1999, p42). These processes together enable students to become deep learners and critical thinkers.

The results speak for themselves. We found that students in these sessions will work together to produce what they are asked for, such as find information using more sophisticated keywords or an evaluation or a list of references and will often assist classmates who are struggling to understand concepts or to use technology. In other words, this is not a ‘dumbing down’ of information, it is simply a different way of presenting and conveying it. As emphasised in the introduction to this chapter, the aim of Step Up is to build learner self-belief through the development of a range of academic study skills and experiences. The principles of information literacy and the skills required at University are covered, but the informal nature and a move away from ‘chalk and talk’ sessions has made these principles easier to grasp for students. If they do not understand, they are not scared to say so – to their peers, to us or to the student ambassadors in the session. We believe

that this approach not only enhances their information literacy, but also significantly enhances their self-efficacy<sup>1</sup>.

Summon has been incredibly helpful in this aspect in all three sessions. In session one (finding information), it would have been impossible to illustrate the massive number of articles, databases and journals held electronically and to point students to the large number of subject databases. One hour was enough time to introduce the concepts behind finding information, and Summon is an excellent way to discover resources from across the range of platforms. Session two really cemented that idea of peer review and credibility and the final session elicited excellent responses when the folders were introduced.

The importance of Summon for Step Up is that three facets from the empirical model of information literacy - finding information, evaluating information and using information - are covered using just one resource. Like many other universities, Staffordshire has rolled out a programme to identify specific qualities that will make students stand out from the crowd. 'The Staffordshire Graduate' includes the skills of digital and information literacy, and the Step Up sessions are a great introduction to these. As an institution that highlights employability issues for its graduates, the Step Up programme is a real success story for Staffordshire, and the successful integration of Summon into the programme contributes to that success.

## The future ...

The library has been approached to continue with Step Up for at least the next 12 months (the sessions, staff and rooms have already been booked!) and, after a recent peer observation of teaching session, a request has been made to add an extra 15 minutes per session to allow for further exploration of resources and student input and feedback. The students are engaged for the full hour and they really are interacting with each other and with the staff. The library's sessions, in terms of their content and accessibility, have ensured that there is a real luxury of time (three sessions), compared with many other sessions that are provided to students in Faculty. Thus there is the incentive to develop material for shorter sessions and add online quizzes (perhaps for badges?) for other students. There will also be more use of Summon in future sessions. It is hugely popular with Step Up students as it is not overwhelming, it is easy to use, and gets the right results fast.

There could be the introduction of more interactive technology, such as the use of Socrative for the 'Ten things you want to know about the library, but were too afraid to ask' ice-breaker in Session 1. There has also been a move from writing on a board to live scribing, so the questions and answers are preserved per session (and added to the VLE).

Information Services have liaised with the course leader in obtaining the data presented in Table 1 (the results came back after the Information Literacy and Summon event), and this follow-up is extremely useful in assessing the success of Step Up in purely statistical terms and for thinking about future progress.

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<sup>1</sup> While at this point we can't demonstrate this directly, we are planning to test the next cohort of students' self-efficacy pre- and post the session to determine any effects, and will report on this once the results are analysed.

**What proportion of students attending continue to University?**

Between 60 and 70% of students who attend the course go on to HE. Some cohorts have 90% progression. The majority go to Staffordshire University.

**How do you advertise and then recruit for Step Up?**

Usually no need to advertise, other than on the website: word of mouth is a big factor.

**Where do your students come from (i.e. are they mostly local)?**

They are mainly local but some travel in from Birmingham, Manchester or London.

**Have many students who attended Step Up graduated from Staffordshire Uni?**

Each year there are graduates mainly achieving 2.1 - some get firsts.

**Table 1: Impact of Step Up**

In addition, we have collated data from feedback, discussions on critical evaluation and the meeting of learning outcomes, which needs to be analysed and reported on. This will include detailed analysis of statistics regarding the future paths of Step Up students and how the library sessions contributed to their knowledge, their confidence and their understanding.

We take a 'before and after' approach to measuring impact, and before any teaching begins we ask students to think about the concept of evaluating information and to write down on a post-it what it means to them. At the end of the session they are asked to write down on another post-it what they have learnt. A comparison of the statements reveals the impact of the session.

Students were asked to feed back on post-it notes their answer to the question "Write what you think 'critical evaluation for webpages' means". Their responses fell into four broad categories which fit to some extent with levels of information discernment identified by Hepworth & Walton (2009). Students' statements are reproduced verbatim in Table 2.

**Before the session: “Write what you think 'critical evaluation for webpages' means”**

<b>Students had no concept (x4)</b>	<b>Navigation/ease of use (x3)</b>	<b>Some analysis (x5)</b>	<b>Aware of the need to analyse and judge (x3)</b>
No idea x2 Not sure Don't know	Knowing how to navigate webpages A detailed summary of a webpage User friendly/easily accessed	Testing to see faults Reflect on and document opinion To extract reliable and relevant information Evaluate whether they are safe Following opinions and conclusions	Assessing pros and cons Analysing the website looking for good and bad points Making as judgement of a web page

**After the session: “What have you learned in today's session?”**

<b>Students had no concept (x0)</b>	<b>Navigation/ease of use (x0)</b>	<b>Some analysis (x14)</b>	<b>Aware of the need to analyse and judge (x3)</b>
		I have learnt sites are not trustworthy (x4) Don't judge a web page purely on a Google quick search Peer review (x2) Do not be too quick to judge a website by its Google description To be very careful about the reliability of websites/search engines It's worth checking the author/host before looking at the content to ensure accuracy Don't trust a website who's tagline is “The truth about...” Not all .org websites can be trusted Don't believe everything you see on the net. Do your own search on subjects Provide feedback, reliability, accuracy, authors etc.	It is deciding whether a webpage is reliable or not To check: site owner, reliability, accuracy, peer evaluation, double check work before using it Learnt to be open-minded as to the reliability of websites. In evaluation interpretation will go a long way

**Table 2: Students' responses pre- and post-session**

In summary, the statements from before the session show that students' grasp of the need to evaluate information is spread across a range from not knowing anything at all, through mechanical notions on look and feel, to an understanding of the need to make sound judgments about websites. After the session, at the very least students are demonstrating that they are aware that they need to do some kind of analysis of a website before using it. In other words, after the session, students' levels of information discernment have increased compared to before the session. It is noticeable that the number of students at the 'high end' of the cognitive scale remained constant.

This is a rewarding result and shows that our Step Up sessions do have impact. We will continue to monitor progress to ensure that the programme meets the needs of these students as they move from hesitant to confident traveller on their learning journey.

## Find out more

The Prezi used for this 20-minute paper can be found at  
<http://prezi.com/yd4nhfdytnzr/summon-information-literacy-and-step-up-to-he/>



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# Going beyond 'find': a Summon before-and-after snapshot

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## Introduction

This paper outlines the impact of introducing Summon into an information skills session at Cambridge University Library, where the author worked until December 2013. Prior to using Summon, the session was characterised by a strong focus on finding and navigating a range of interfaces. With the introduction of Summon as the main search tool, session time could instead be used to focus on critically evaluating and selecting appropriate information for academic tasks and practices (composing an essay or researching a project, for example). This shift in emphasis brought the session into constructive alignment with the participants' academic information needs as determined by their curricula, and moved the learning focus on from basic procedural and navigational training to a higher-level engagement with academic conventions and practices - away from 'how to' and towards 'why'.

## Session overview

This paper contrasts the approach and content of the pre-Summon session presented in 2011 under the title "How to find things on your reading list" with that presented in the following year as "How to decode your reading list". In both cases the session format consisted of a one-hour, hands-on, face-to-face workshop open to students in all disciplines. The primary audience for both versions of the session was students in a directed learning phase (whether at undergraduate or masters level) during which the reading list is a key learning tool.

In 2011, prior to the introduction of Summon, the learning objectives of the session were as follows:

- To discover how to decipher your reading list
- To learn how to find incomplete references
- **To find out where to search for what**
- To save yourself time and energy in getting to the sources you need

Because of the complex nature of the finding aids at that time the significant majority of the session was devoted to objective 3. With scholarly content divided by format across three partly overlapping platforms - the catalogue, e-journals A-Z list, and e-resources gateway - students faced a complex task in attempting to locate known-item material, since before they could begin to search for an item they needed first to select the correct search interface for the relevant material type – book, print



journal, e-journal, article, etc. Identifying the appropriate search tool for locating a particular item therefore demanded not only a sophisticated understanding of scholarly formats and how they are referenced, but also sufficient insight into the library's principles of information organisation to know which formats could be found through each interface (recalling the all-too-familiar librarianly injunction that "You can't find journal articles in the library catalogue ...").

This is a steep demand to make of students at any level. In a directed learning phase, where assessment is focused not on demonstrating that you can *find* information but on showing that you can *make use of it* in an appropriate academic manner, it is questionable whether it supports students' learning in any useful way or whether instead it burdens students with an unnecessary cognitive load and thus actually acts as a barrier to learning. In a one-hour session, after looking at the three interfaces and exploring what type of information could be located in each, little time was left to discuss what participants might do with the results after they had found them. The 2011 learning objectives were therefore imposed by the complexity of the finding system, rather than as a means of helping students to develop academic abilities and values.

In contrast, the learning objectives for the 2012 session using Summon were as follows:

- **understand reading list structure and purpose**
- **know how to critically evaluate a reading list**
- understand the various material formats
- recognise and reconstruct incomplete references

With the advent of a single interface capable of handling searches for all publication formats, workshop time was no longer driven by the imperative for students to understand the 'correct' source for each type. The time reclaimed from functional instruction was used instead to discuss issues of criticality and selectivity, to look at the reading list as a learning tool, and to begin to uncover and talk about academic practices and conventions around information. This shift in focus is mirrored in a change in the verbs associated with each session: where the 2011 class was focused on *finding*, the 2012 was focused on *analysing*, *evaluating* and *using* information in the context of succeeding in a specific academic task. Now we could spend the time discussing why particular scholarly communications were made in the form of a book, an article, or a conference paper, and considering the benefits and limitations each format might have for students' information needs.

## **The reading list as a learning tool**

This shift from 'find' to 'use' is reflected in the changes made to the supporting materials for the class. In 2011 the handout was all about *looking in the right place* for the material you wanted (figure 1).

## Books and book chapters

To follow up a reference like this ...

Dixon, T. (2004) *How to get a first: the essential guide to academic success*. Routledge: London

or like this ...

Smith, N. 'Process improvement and innovation in construction', in D. Adamson & A. Pollington (2006) *Change in the construction industry*. Routledge: London

... look on **LibrarySearch** <http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk>

- contains records for printed books and journals in every library in the University – and ebooks too
- ! if you're looking for a chapter on LibrarySearch, you need to search for the *main book title*, not the 'chapter name' - look for what's on the spine

## Journals and journal articles

To find a reference like this ...

McBrayer, J.P. (2010). Moral perception and the causal objection. *Ratio*, 23(3), 291-307.

... look in the **e-journals A-Z list** [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/ejournals](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/ejournals)

- search by the *journal title* – in this instance it's *Ratio* - rather than the article information
- ! some journals still only exist in print form. If you can't find it on the A-Z list, have a look on LibrarySearch

Figure 1: Handout from 2011 session (detail)

In 2012, the handout looks at the characteristics of the main academic information formats not from a 'where to look for what' standpoint but rather from a 'when might you want to use a ...' angle (figure 2).

Format	What do they aim to do?	What are they good for?
<b>Textbooks</b>	Give a general, student-focused overview of a large field; outline the main areas and schools of thought.	General background to a topic and its concepts, plus an idea of how it's conventionally taught
<b>Monographs</b> (scholarly books)	Offer original thinking or research on a specialist topic; give detailed individual vision or standpoint.	Delving into a subject more deeply; finding supportive/opposing arguments
<b>Edited books</b> (of essays or chapters)	Explore different but related facets of a topic in essays by various authors. Look for "ed." or "eds." in the citation.	Finding different viewpoints or takes on a topic; getting a 'snapshot' of the current state of the field; often useful background info
<b>Conference proceedings</b>	Collect all the papers given at a conference – often works in progress or interim reports, which may be less 'finished' than book chapters or journal articles.	Discovering new topics and trends in the field; finding new and upcoming authors; refreshing your familiarity with the field
<b>Festschriften</b> (singular: 'Festschrift')	Edited books of essays which celebrate the work of a high-profile scholar (rather than a theme or topic): titles generally include the scholar's name.	Overview of how the field has developed in the course of the scholar's lifetime, and insights into his/her impact on it
<b>Academic journals</b>	Widely scoping, regularly issued publications with short accounts of recent research in a particular field or area. If you find a journal with a	Quicker to publish and broader content range than books, thus good 'snapshots' of

Figure 2: Handout from 2012 session (detail)

The 2012 handout also contains example citations in Harvard style for each material type, so participants can learn to ‘decode’ the citations on their reading lists and quickly recognise the size, scope and nature of what they’re being asked to read.

Looking at reading lists in this way means that the information they provide can be weighed up from the point of view of what it has to offer a student engaged on a particular academic task. This offers a practical context and a purpose for the otherwise dry task of information-finding, enabling participants to apply the skills and insights developed in the class to the real context of writing an essay, familiarising themselves with a seminar topic, or taking up a standpoint in relation to an argument or hypothesis.

This approach also means that the nature and function of the reading list itself can be foregrounded and investigated. Rarely do we take the time to explain to students that reading lists are not designed to be read conscientiously and sequentially from the first item down to the last, but rather *that the student is expected to exercise critical selectivity* in choosing which items to read and where to start. Yet as Edwards (2011) points out, the realisation that “You don’t have to read every book on the reading list” is one of a number of academic threshold concepts – difficult yet transformative insights that, once grasped, enable students to deepen their understanding and progress in their learning (p.3).

Notably, this threshold concept – that the reading list is not intended to be consumed in order of appearance, but should be prioritised or triaged according to the individual’s need, context and point of view – may directly contradict the practices students have encountered in other learning contexts, and may therefore feel deeply counterintuitive and unsettling. Introducing students to Cottrell’s dichotomy of virtue vs. effectiveness in studying (2013, p.100) provides a very useful way of situating this unfamiliar behaviour in its academic context: while it may feel deeply virtuous to read every item on the list systematically, one after another, this is not an effective way to meet the goals of the higher education learning culture, which require individuals to develop an own informed view of the topic and take up a standpoint – in other words, to engage in the practice of sensemaking.

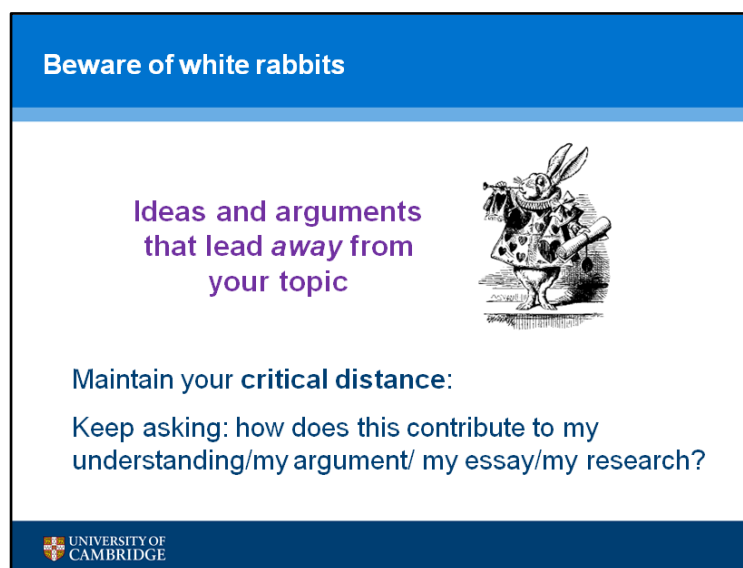
The humble reading list, in fact, offers an outstanding opportunity to highlight how academic practice differs from that encountered by students in information environments with different conventions and behaviours, such as secondary education or the workplace. It enables the teaching librarian to make a direct connection between the apparently simplistic activity of finding information and the higher-level intellectual practices and values of the academic community. It also enables us to point out that the same critically selective approach can be applied to any list encountered in scholarly literature, such as a bibliography. This insight can therefore be deployed throughout the student’s academic journey even after the directed learning phase has been succeeded by independent research.

## **Users’ expectations, system performance, and white rabbits**

The composite system underpinning the 2011 session was complex and unintuitive, with apparently arbitrary divisions of content, and did not match users’ expectations. Although there are recognised issues with the completeness of Summon’s search results, the *range* of material types retrieved and presented together is a much closer match with user expectations. For both of these reasons – the affordance as well as the limitation – I feel that Summon is best used for supporting the search

practices of directed learning phases, in which students track down recommended items and related publications rather than engaging in full-on topic searching. Therefore (and perhaps paradoxically in view of its 'discovery' label) I would recommend Summon to students as a tool for connecting with known items, not for discovering new ones. However, the 'suggested database' function makes an excellent bridge into talking about the conceptual and practical differences between tracking down items pre-selected by a lecturer, and the foray into the unknown and unbounded which is a structured literature search.

With the introduction of Summon, therefore, the keynote of my teaching was to ask students: "Now you've located these things, how will you use them?" The slide in figure 4, taken from the 2012 session, encourages students to develop a critical perspective on secondary literature by using their assignment question to evaluate and filter search results for relevance to the task at hand. In Pickard's metaphor, a 'white rabbit' is an attractive distraction that crosses your path and "lead[s] you away from your focus" (2007, p.56) - if you follow it, you may be drawn away from your topic and end up falling down a rabbit hole ...



**Figure 3: white rabbits and critical distance**

Illustration by John Tenniel (public domain, retrieved from Wikimedia Commons)

It is the implications for learner agency that excite me the most about the possibilities of Summon. By allowing us to reclaim class time from the procedural and navigational, making the corresponding shift in focus from 'find' to 'use', we can move away from the impoverished discourse of 'user education' which construes system familiarity as an indicator of understanding. Instead, we can facilitate our students' understanding of scholarly information behaviour and how research is conducted and communicated. Instead of placing complex interfaces between learners and the information they need, we can help them to articulate and start to model the information practices and values that will enable them access to the academic community of practice.

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# Information skills at UCO using Summon

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Information Skills at  
UCO using **Summon**



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## Institutional background

University Campus Oldham is a collaborative partnership between the University of Huddersfield and the Oldham College. Based on a campus located centrally in Oldham, Greater Manchester, UCO offers undergraduate and postgraduate provision accredited by the University of Huddersfield. As part of our collaborative provision agreement, UCO students have access to electronic resources provided by the University of Huddersfield, which uses Summon as its discovery system.

UCO has approximately 690 students studying a range of subjects including Education, Health and Community Studies, Law, Construction, Psychological Studies, Business, Performance and Digital Arts. As Senior Librarian I provide the majority of the Information Skills sessions at UCO, and I use Summon as the starting point for all of these subject areas, apart from Law (my Law sessions focus on LexisLibrary and Westlaw, though I do cover Summon as well).

Most of the librarians presenting at the Information Literacy and Summon 2013 event use Summon as a single discovery system for their institution. This means that they can present it to their students as very much a single starting point for their information searches. The context at UCO is somewhat different as we have a separate catalogue for the Library on campus, since our Library catalogue data isn't loaded into Huddersfield's Summon system. (Our students *can* borrow books



from the Huddersfield campus but it's a 35 mile round trip!) Therefore, I have to make sure our students know how to access our catalogue, how to find a book on the shelves and how to place a reservation before I move onto Summon. However, this can be achieved in a very short time, after which I can demonstrate how Summon offers a single point of access for the majority of Huddersfield e-resources.

I always make Information Skills sessions subject-specific, and do my best to avoid generic examples. It's time consuming, but helps to ensure that the session and Summon seem relevant to the students. I like to base sessions around a current assignment that they are working on. I always do some introductory work on breaking down an assignment title, thinking about search terms and sources of information. For many first-year groups I'll look at freely available sources of information online (legislation and government documents are invaluable for Health and Education students particularly). Normally by the time I get to my demo of Summon, I've discussed the importance of assessing information sources for authority and reliability. It's a nice natural progression to then say "And we've got this great search tool that will find high-quality, academic information for you!"

## Searching with Summon

It's easy to set the stage with Summon; it's a single search box, like Google, so students are already familiar with the 'feel' of the interface. I start my demo with a simple search term, for instance 'reflective practice', and point out that Summon makes suggestions for your search as you type, just like Google. The search term I demonstrated at the Information Literacy and Summon 2013 event was 'reflective practice in nursing', a topic that may be relevant to our Health students. During taught sessions I encourage students to explore the options, to evaluate the recommendations made by Summon, and to consider critically why these recommendations are being made.

I spend five to ten minutes demonstrating the main features on Summon by performing a search, then refining my results using the options on the results page. Because Summon doesn't include UCO's library holdings, as soon as I get to the results page, I immediately draw their attention to the 'Refine Your Search' options, and primarily the 'Full Text Online' limiter.

Due to Huddersfield's strong online provision, selecting 'Full Text Online' only slightly reduces the total number of hits: in many cases narrowing the results set in this way retains 90-95% of the original results. I always ask participants to guess how many electronic results we'll retain after limiting to full text; I often find that people underestimate the number and guess less than 75% (often less than half). On the day at Information Literacy and Summon 2013 other librarians guessed that we'd get fewer than 50,000 electronic results out of a total of 64,000 results. The actual total was 59,000 (92%!). This looks great when your students realise that we've only lost a small percentage of total results. It's also a nice chance to demonstrate your psychic librarian powers!

Once I've limited results to full text online only, I explore the other options and their benefits. As currency is important in some disciplines, I show students how to sort by date order. I also show them how to limit their results by publication date, as some UCO assignments have limitations regarding the date of references. Finally, I show how to limit results by item type and use that as an opportunity to discuss the different types of resources. For first-year groups, I'll use this as an opportunity to check that they understand what journal articles or conference proceedings are. For

some sessions, I may highlight how some types of results are of particular relevance for their assignment. It can also be an opportunity to highlight and promote the strength of Huddersfield's ebook provision for their subject, and, moving away from Summon, demonstrate the interfaces of ebook or journal providers.

I then like to give participants 10-15 minutes to search independently around their assignment subject, while I move around the room speaking to individual students. This enables me to gauge their understanding of what we've discussed so far, and pick up any common mistakes that people are making. After I gather the students back to share and reflect on the results of the individual activity, I often show the advanced search feature (now in Summon 2.0) as I find this helps with some of the issues they raise.

Although in conversation with professional colleagues it's common to refer to 'facets', I always refer to the Refine Your Search *options* on the left-hand side of the screen. In my experience 'search options' is the most intuitive description of what those features do, but it's important to use whatever language your students are most likely to understand or recognise that you should be using. Many students have commented on more than one occasion that "It's like eBay" or "It's like Amazon". The similarity between features in Summon and the search tools in familiar web resources is an undoubted plus.

Prior to the implementation of Summon at UCO, I used to cover Boolean, phrase searching and truncation in Information Skills sessions. Since delivering sessions based around Summon, I no longer teach Boolean as a technique. I mention it if I demonstrate the Advanced Search options (in terms of combining fields with an 'and' or an 'or', and how this affects the results obtained) but I normally only do so with classes doing literature reviews or dissertations. I continue to mention truncation in sessions covering individual databases, but have dropped it from classes based solely around Summon. Phrase searching is the only one of these techniques I use with any great regularity myself, and remains useful on Summon.

With the release of Summon 2.0 and its implementation at Huddersfield I have made some changes to my instruction. I now incorporate the advanced search options into many of my sessions for second- and third-year students, depending on the particular information needs of each group. The facility in Summon 2.0 to search in title or abstract is particularly useful for students carrying out literature studies, for example our final-year Health and Community Studies students. Introducing the principles underlying the advanced search features in Summon is of particular value when these groups move on to use more specialised databases such as Medline or ScienceDirect. In addition, the option to limit by discipline or by subject term has proven valuable to students struggling to locate *relevant* information rather than merely information in large quantities.

## Find out more

You can see examples of Information Skills presentations I've run at UCO at [www.slideshare.com/timjpleonard](http://www.slideshare.com/timjpleonard). Any further queries on how I deliver sessions on Summon at UCO, which may be particularly relevant to other Collaborative Partnership or Mixed Economy Institutions, can be directed to me at [tjpleonard@gmail.com](mailto:tjpleonard@gmail.com) or via [@TimJPLeonard](https://twitter.com/TimJPLeonard).



# Finding full text in five minutes

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## Introduction

This presentation was delivered at the 2nd UK Information Literacy and Summon Day in order to get feedback from delegates that would allow me to develop it further before the start of the 2013/14 academic year, when it would first be delivered to students.

## Background and approach

This presentation is aimed at students at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and looks at how to use Library Search, MMU's branding of Summon, to find full-text resources online in five minutes. It is designed to be the first in a series of bite-size information literacy sessions delivered to students. It focuses on quickly giving users the basics they need to get up and running with Library Search themselves rather than going into information literacy skills in any particular depth, which is the focus of later sessions.

Having seen Ned Potter's presentation 'Good presentations matter' online (<http://www.slideshare.net/thewikiman/good-presentations-matter>), I was keen to adopt some of the good practice he describes. I wanted attractive slides that would support what I was saying with short and punchy points. I tried to abide by the four multimedia learning principles Potter mentions in the following ways:

- **Coherence** – I aimed to keep the presentation free from extraneous information and did not use templates, animations or sounds
- **Signalling** – I used large fonts (minimum 24pt.), used font size and colour to emphasise important parts of the text and aimed to make one point per slide as far as appropriate
- **Redundancy** – I avoided just reading out the presentation verbatim, avoided using bullet points and used full sentences to make my points as far as appropriate
- **Spatial and temporal contiguity** – I chose to use live demonstrations of Library Search in order to provide the relevant visual element that supports what the slides say

The presentation is very short. Previous experience of teaching information literacy to students has lead me to believe that, very often, less is more. A short presentation avoids information overload and, in this case, emphasises that the mechanics of using Library Search are quick and easy to get to grips with.

In terms of structure, I introduce myself to the audience and give my job role first in order to establish myself as an authority on this subject and communicate to people why they should listen to what I have to say. This was identified as good practice in a course on presentation skills I attended as part of the NoWAL CPD Programme ([www.nowal.ac.uk](http://www.nowal.ac.uk)). Then I briefly introduce the session itself. In giving the presentation's title, I make the duration of the presentation implicit. Again, defining the length of a presentation was identified as good practice in the NoWAL CPD Programme presentation skills course.

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# Finding full text



in 5 minutes



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Next, I explain that we will use Library Search to find the full text. What I have since identified a need to do is explain to the audience why this is important and relevant to them. Now, when delivering this presentation, I explain that using library e-resources can help students to get better grades and give an example of research that shows a positive relationship between library resource use and degree result (Stone and Ramsden, 2013).

The body of the presentation is a series of five questions of the kind that students might ask:

1. What is Library Search?
2. Where is Library Search?
3. How do I use Library Search?
4. How do I see the full text?
5. How do I make my search better?

Questions were used as a simple way of mirroring some of the typical thought processes of a person who is new to Library Search. I aimed to engage students via this format as it provides an effective rhetorical device that I hoped would lead the audience to consider the questions themselves. The answers to the questions aim to give students enough basic information on Library Search to start using it themselves. Having five questions creates a symmetry with the 'five minutes' theme of the presentation. Each question is asked rhetorically whilst being shown on screen.

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# 1. **What** is Library Search?

⏪ ⏴ ⏵ ⏩

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After each question is asked, the answer is presented on the next slide and a verbal explanation is given. The question and answer are made visible simultaneously to help ensure they do not become disconnected in the audience's mind, avoiding situations where the audience can see the answer but cannot remember the question.

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# 1. **What** is Library Search?

A service that lets you **easily**  
**find all types of materials** for  
your studies in one place

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For questions two to five, the audience is given a demonstration after the answer has been conveyed in written and verbal form. This illustrates the answer in practical terms and reinforces learning. So, for example, for question two “Where is Library Search?” I show the audience how to get to the MMU Library website and where the Library Search box is located on the website.

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## 2. Where is Library Search?

It's on the **MMU Library Website**

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At the end of the presentation there is a summary slide, which gives all five question and answer pairs in order to reinforce the audience's learning. This is read out and expanded upon verbally in order to re-emphasize the simplicity of using Library Search.

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1. **What** is Library Search? A service that lets **you easily** find **all types of materials** for your studies in one place

2. **Where** is Library Search? It's on the **MMU Library Website**

3. **How** do I use Library Search? You enter **keywords** and hit Search

4. **How** do I see the full text? **Click on a title** to see the fulltext

5. **How** do I make my search better? You **refine** your search if you need to

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Finally, I give my contact details so that students can get in touch and ask more questions later, conveying the message that MMU Library encourages communication and is available to support them with their studies.

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## ...and if you need help

- Email me at [d.jenkins@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:d.jenkins@mmu.ac.uk)
  - Call Didsbury Library on **0161 2476123**
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### Trialling the presentation

Time constraints at the Summon and Information Literacy 2014 event meant it was not possible to solicit feedback from delegates. However, this presentation was shared with colleagues at MMU Library afterwards and some chose to use and adapt it for their own teaching.

I have delivered this content as a standalone session and included it as part of general information literacy sessions. The reaction from students I have taught has been positive, with 94.8% of students who completed our feedback survey stating that they felt more confident about finding information for their studies as a result and 98.5% stating that the amount of information provided in the session was about right. In the general sessions some students went further, making positive comments about the Library Search content in particular when describing which part of the session they found most useful, for example:

"Library Search. Great information on how to be more accurate within searches"

"Library search Different types of sites to use good demonstration on how to use".

Additionally, academics who attended the sessions have given positive feedback verbally and in writing, for example:

"You went down really well with our students - thanks for coming"

"Thanks for the slides - brilliant! I'll upload them on Moodle".

We will continue soliciting feedback throughout this academic year to inform the ongoing development of these information literacy sessions.

## Find out more

You can find the full slides for 'Finding Full Text in Five Minutes' at <http://www.slideshare.net/SummonIL/library-search-lightning-session-25643988>.

## References

Stone, G. and Ramsden, B. (2013) 'Library Impact Data Project: looking for the link between library usage and student attainment', *College and Research Libraries* 74(6), 546-559.

# Thinking about keywords and searching Summon as in-class group activity

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## **Introduction**

This paper describes a short practical activity used at Middlesex University to teach students about the importance of keywords and thinking about alternative terminology before searching Summon. This activity is used at all levels and is a whole-class activity. It deliberately uses an image unconnected with Computer Science or Design Engineering, the areas in which we teach.

## **Prior activities**

Our first-year undergraduate training is called 'Better than Google!'. This sets a target to measure Summon against, and to challenge the assumption that searching Google is all our students need to do to find information for their project. We also outline the marking criteria for the coursework we are linking our teaching to, emphasising the role the library can play in increasing their final mark.

Before we start the keyword activity the students will typically have done one or both of the following group activities:

- A card sorting game on the key resources in the library,
- OR
- An activity looking at actual samples of items and objects in the library (Design Engineering).

These games enable us to focus their attention on higher-quality resources such as books and academic journal articles and to discuss their value in an academic environment and the risks of relying on websites, newspapers and popular or trade journals. We emphasise that we are teaching students to find the quality information which will get them better marks, often referring back to the coursework marking criteria.

The card game templates and details of the other games and activities we use can be found on the Jorum site ([www.jorum.ac.uk](http://www.jorum.ac.uk)) and may be reused under Creative Commons Licence (Edwards and Hill 2012).

## Thinking about keywords: the fruit stall

The first part of the activity is done by the whole class looking at a picture of a market fruit stall (figure 1).



**Figure 1: Picture of fruit stall by Ross Parker, 2006 (CC BY-NC 2.0)**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rossjamesparker/89414788/>

This picture has been deliberately chosen to be outside the student's normal subject area and because it contains lots of detail for them to pick up on. Our approach is as follows:

1. We ask the students to say what they see in the picture: The normal response is 'fruit', although Design students often say 'colour'.
2. We then ask them to be more specific than fruit, for example 'bananas', 'apples', etc. We make the point that narrowing a search down gets more focussed results.
3. The students are then asked for other things they see: for example, they may focus on the people. This leads to a discussion of, for example, alternative terms for old people such as 'OAP', 'senior citizen' or 'pensioner'. Memorably one student once suggested the man in black might be a shoplifter, from which we then got alternative terms such as 'thief' or 'criminal'! This enables us to stress the need for alternative search terms.
4. In the background is a large store and we ask which it is. Most students spot this is Iceland. This leads into a discussion around the relationship – competitive – between Iceland and the stall and the need to think about the wider context of the search, for example the business environment. The focus here could be on food and nutrition, vitamins and minerals, five-a-day, etc., if we were teaching Natural Sciences students.
5. Finally, we ask for examples of fruit which are also technology, such as 'apple' or 'orange', to make the point that students will of course get false positives when searching and need to allow for this in devising their searches.



It is worth noting that every discussion is different when we do this. That helps keep us fresh when teaching and allow the students the freedom to be radical in their ideas.

## Thinking about keywords: the actual project

Having got the students thinking in this way, we then focus on their actual project, for example, this first-year Computer Science project:

An investigation of a public interactive system e.g. railway or parking ticket machine, public information kiosk or similar system including usability issues, user experience and interaction.

We then run through the same stages as we have done with the fruit stall. We make sure we have to hand our own possible alternative words in case the class dries up. Applying the methodology to the project just described might produce the following results:

1. **What are the key terms?** Public, interactive, system, etc.
2. **What alternative words could they use?** Railway: Train or rail or line or railroad, travel or journey, etc.
3. **What more specific terms could they use?** Ticket: Oyster card or travel card, single or return, etc.
4. **What related or broader subjects can they suggest?** User interaction: Psychology, behaviour, customer error, age, gender, etc.

This then prepares them to see what they can find using Summon, which is the next part of the training session.

## Searching Summon

In groups of three we ask the students to search Summon to find information on the topic we have just investigated by trying out some of the terms just used. Splitting the class into groups of three encourages the students to discuss their searching. It also means there are typically six or seven groups to help rather than 22 individuals. It is thus easier for one person to support their hands-on learning.

At this point students learn the following:

1. The importance of logging into the University portal to ensure Summon links properly off site
2. How poor choice of keywords leads to too many results or inappropriate results. For example, when a search for 'oyster' found oyster-flavoured ice cream, not the Oyster smartcard they had hoped for!

3. The simplicity of Summon as a searching system
4. The easy way Summon creates Harvard references, which usually impresses.

The librarian running the lesson will go from group to group assisting with the searching and prompting the groups to try things, typically additional keywords or phrase searching. We also point out the refining tools, particularly the 'Full Text Only' option and date slider (as Computing students in particular need current information), and the reference creation process. We make clear that saving the pdfs found is important and separate from saving the references, as some students will assume saving the reference also saves the pdf.

A common problem at this stage is when links in Summon fail to connect, usually when the resources are from EBSCO or the Directory of Open Access journals, or when the resources are new and the normalisation process has yet to occur. Students expect Summon to work faultlessly, so we have to explain the problems and give reasons why failures occur. It is noticeable how negative an impression such failures have on students who expect links always to work, which sadly impacts poorly on both Summon as the search engine and EBSCO as the resource provider.

Students will typically spend 15-20 minutes on this part of the class. At the end we then ask for feedback and reflect with them on what they have just done, using a comparison with Google. The reflection looks like this (Table 1):

Google	Summon
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar and easy to use</li> <li>• Finds too much information</li> <li>• Fast results</li> <li>• Access from any computer</li> <li>• Access to some books and journals</li> <li>• Designed to sell you things</li> <li>• Search results sponsored</li> <li>• Searches for info from any source</li> <li>• Pay for academic information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use</li> <li>• Finds lots of academic info</li> <li>• Fast results</li> <li>• Access from any computer</li> <li>• Access to lots of books and journals</li> <li>• Designed to find you information</li> <li>• Search results by relevance</li> <li>• Searches quality resources</li> <li>• Free access to full text</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Comparing the characteristics of Google and Summon**

We find that mentioning the cost of accessing information outside of the University and how using Summon will save students money is useful. The high cost of our e-journal collections is used to point out that the resources must be good if the vendors can charge so much and that it is not something that students will find free on the internet. We again emphasise quality of sources as being important. This then leads onto a further activity around how to establish what 'quality' means in the context of academic information.

## Conclusion

The activities described above are something we have now used many times in our teaching and we know they work. We believe this activity-based approach where students discuss, suggest and

experiment promotes deeper learning than the traditional following through of a demonstration. A fuller description of how we came to develop this and other activities is contained in our other paper in this collection.

## Reference

Edwards, A. and Hill, V. (2012) Games used in teaching information literacy skills. Available from <http://find.jorum.ac.uk/resources/18121> [accessed 11/10/13].